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Dysenteria
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By Robert B. Honeyman of Arg.

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The Dysentery (which will form the subject of the following essay) has, in all ages, and in most countries, engaged the attention, and occupied the labours of the most eminent medical authors; and with great reason; as being a disease of so frequent occurrence; so extensive and general in its ravages at certain seasons; so distressing in its symptoms; and often so fatal in its termination.

But although the number of writers on this disease is very great; many of them, of great merit; generally known, and generally read; yet, as the disease will probably claim a conspicuous share of the attention, and study of the medical practitioner; every hint, every notice, every attempt, (even this feeble one) to illustrate the subject, may be of some avail; if not to inform the judgment, yet to refresh the memory.

Though the Dysentery prevails occasionally, with

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great malignity, in the northern and eastern sections of this wide, extended Republic, still the southern States, from their climate and other causes, are particularly obnoxious to the ravages of this disease; as in those regions, the return of the Dysentery, in the Summer and Autumn, in a greater or less degree, is as certain as the return of the seasons themselves. It therefore behoves all, who purpose to exercise the medical art in those countries, to study, with particular care, the nature and treatment of this formidable malady.

It is likewise peculiarly incumbent on those, whose distination it is to serve their country in a medical capacity, to endeavour to attain a perfect knowledge of the causes, symptoms, and treatment of the Dysentery; as being (among the diseases to which soldiers are liable) by far the most frequent, and fatal; never failing, in a greater or less degree, to appear on their taking the field, especially in the Summer; and continuing to increase in frequency, and malignity, till checked by the coldness of the season; and

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not unfrequently have the devastations of this disease alone, been so general, that they have weakened whole armies to such a degree, during the most important season of military operations, as to frustrate the best concerted plans of their commanders.

As the Dysentery is commonly an epidemic disease, and as (like other epidemics) its nature and symptoms vary considerably in different years, so that the successful treatment of the disease in one year may prove inefficacious in a succeeding one; and as, even in the same epidemic, the remedies at the commencement must often be changed or modified as the season advances; the judgment of the Physician is here called upon for its fullest exercise; to determine from a careful examination of the symptoms, the several indications, and the most appropriate remedies.

And though many authors have given descriptions of epidemic Dysenteries, which came under their observation, with their manner of treating them; yet as the nature and appearance of epidemic diseases are so vari=

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able, the principal dependence for successful treatment, must be the attentive observation, and the maturely weighed judgment of the Physician. So that the contracted limits of this essay will be confined to a general account of the disease, as it appears commonly, either sporadic or epidemic; its symptoms, and causes, together with the treatment, which has generally been found most successful.

This disease frequently commences with chillness, and shivering, succeeded by heat and other symptoms of pyrexia; but in a majority of cases, the local complaint appears first, and the febrile symptoms come on soon after.

The symptoms, which characterize this affection, and point out its nature most manifestly, are the following:- costiveness and flatulency, which are often considerable; there are severe griping pains, an almost continual tenesmus; the stools are frequent, but the discharges are very inconsiderable, and the matter voided, is various both in colour, and consistence: in some instances, it consists of mucus, and then the disease is called Dysenteria Alba, or Morbus Mu=

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The preparations of Iron, being useful in all diseases proceeding from a debilitated state of the digestive organs, are particularly adapted to the chronic forms of Dysentery: they are sometimes, the only medicines, that will restore the tone of the Intestines.

In some particular cases of Chronic Dysentery, the balsams and turpentines have had wonderful effects: in a short time, they have put a stop to the frequent discharges; relieved all the symptoms, particularly the tenesmus, (which is often so distressing,) and restored, completely the tone of the Intestines.

The cascarilla is very useful in this form of Dysentery; as also are gum kino, logwood, the root of the running briar, and some others.

If the fever attending the Dysentery should take on an Intermittent form, it should be treated with the Peruvian Bark, Cornus Florida, and such other medicines, as are adapted to the form of the fever.

If the fever be of the Typhoid kind, cordials and stimulants must be given; such as the serpentaria,

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volatile alkali, laudanum, camphor, and the like.

As the disease is very liable to relapses, persons recovering from it, should observe the greatest caution, and regularity in their diet, and should go warmly clothed.

I have now concluded this short, and imperfect essay, but I should consider myself wanting in gratitude, were I not to avail myself of the present occasion, to offer my grateful acknowledgements, for the many favours extended to me, by you, Gentlemen, who preside in this University, (the pectum salieus of our medical knowledge), and who, by your learned disquisitions, instill into the minds of your auditors, those salutary precepts, by which they are enabled to combat the power of Disease, and snatch from impending destruction, so many of our fellow-creatures.

That you may, in private life, long enjoy the blessings of health, and domestic happiness; and that your professorial labours may continue, as heretofore, to advance the reputation and usefulness of this celebrated Seat of Science; is the ardent wish of the Author.

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